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ABSTRACT

To gauge reactions to the developmental testing of the broadcast component of an Arts Foundation Course, 18 members of the team identified as either producer or academic on a television or radio program tested were sent questionnaires containing open response type questions. In addition, the views of members of the Institute of Educational Technology closely involved with the developmental testing were collected through a series of informal discussions. Results indicated that full developmental testing of a broadcast component requires the following conditions: (1) adequate resources must be allocated including finance, personnel, and production time; (2) agreement to test must be made early enough to ensure production of all programs in time for testing; (3) production methods must be developed which will make draft versions of programs possible; (4) criteria for deciding which courses or programs to test must be identified; and (5) there must be a general recognition that developmental testing might indicate the need for a total remake of the program. Appendices include the questionnaire used, written responses, sample developmental testing report, and a student questionnaire. (JEG)

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The Developmental Testing of A101: a Follow-up Study

by

Duncan H. Brown

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THE PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY

The purpose of this study was to gauge the reactions of members of the A101, Arts Foundation Course, course team to the developmental testing of the broadcast component of that course. In this way the study would try to establish the extent to which the testing had been seen to be effective and to point to any apparent weakness in the method as it applied in this particular case. Using this material it was hoped to reach some conclusions about ways in which current approaches to the developmental testing of the broadcast component of courses might be strengthened.

Originally the reactions of individual course team members were to have been collected through a series of interviews. However, following a request by the course team, these interviews were replaced by a single questionnaire containing a small number of open-response type questions.[1] This questionnaire was sent to eighteen members of the A101 course team who had earlier been identified as having been either producer or academic on a television or radio programme which was developmentally tested. Of these, nine returned completed questionnaires.[2] This low response rate was due, at least in part, to the large number of the course team who had moved on to other commitments. Because of this it was either impossible to contact them or they felt unable to devote the time to completing the questionniare.

In addition the views of those members of the Institute of Educational Technology who had been closely involved with the developmental testing of A101 were collected through a series of informal discussions.

This paper summarises and comments on the views put forward in the nine completed questionnaires and the discussions.

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[1] A copy of the questionnaire is contained in Appendix A.

[2] The responses from these nine completed questionnaires (six from producers and three from academics) are contained in Appendix B.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL TESTING OF A101

The Background to the Decision

The decision to developmentally test A101 was made at a comparatively late stage in the production of the course. It grew out of the success of a particular approach to developmental testing which had been piloted on A241, Elements of Music. This course used radio in a radically new way to teach some of the technical aspects of music and had used developmental testing as a method of pre-testing elements of the course. [3]

In February 1976 the developmental testing of A241 had begun, but agreement had not been given by the Senate of the Open University that students involved in the testing should receive academic credit if they successfully completed the course. Obtaining this agreement was seen as a crucial factor since earlier attempts at developmental testing had found that paying testers had not been successful. These paid testers had a much higher drop-out rate than 'real' Open University students. They also spent 30 - 50 percent less time working on the units than the students who were later to study them. [4] In earlier attempts at developmental testing this underestimate of the time required to complete a course unit had seriously misled the course teams. [5]

Academic credit was first offered to testers in June 1976. Provided they completed the course in a satisfactory manner, and were successful in a final examination, they could be credited with having passed the Open University course they had been testing.

This brought a number of major advantages. The testers were drawn from

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[3] For a detailed description of the developmental testing of A241 see Euan Henderson and Michael Nathenson, "Developmental Testing: an Empirical Approach to Course Improvement," Programmed Learning and Educational Technology, 13, No 4 (1976), 31 - 42; see also Frances Berrigan, "Developmental Testing of AV Materials," Journal of Educational Television, 3, No 2 (1977), 59 - 63.

[4] Henderson and Nathenson, pp. 32 - 33.

[5] Michael Macdonald-Ross, "Developmental Testing in 1970" Milton Keynes: Open University, Institute of Educational Technology, 1970, p. 7 (Mimeographed).

a pool of applicants who had not been offered places because none remained available in that particular year. However, in other ways they resembled the students who would later be taking the course.

In contrast to these advantages, the award of academic credit to testers also posed a major problem since the complete broadcast component of the course would rarely, if ever, be available for testing. This was because the broadcasts were not normally produced in sequence and production of certain programmes, sometimes even those intended for eventual transmission early in the course, might continue after the draft version of the course had begun to be tested. Producers were worried that courses would be tested without the full broadcast component. This could have led to television and radio becoming peripheral, non-essential elements of a course, with an even greater emphasis than normal on print materials. Despite this difficulty it was eventually agreed that students involved in testing should receive academic credit. However, it is clear that this problem had not been fully solved and could cause difficulties later.

The proposal that A101 should be developmentally tested was made in a memo dated 2nd April, 1976 which was discussed at the A101 course team meeting on 8th April 1976. Included with the memo was an outline for a seminar to be held at the Open University on 10th May 1976, where the results of the work on A241 would be presented, followed by a discussion of the future relevance of this approach to Open University course production. By June 10th 1976 I.E.T. members had found general agreement to the developmenal testing of A101.

From these dates we see that the decision to apply to A101 the methods used for developmentally testing A241 was made very rapidly. Unfortunately, it was made very late in the production of the course. At the course team meeting on June 10th it was noted that

> "... 16 broadcasts would be made before developmental testing began, but that changes could only be made to the relevant units or broadcast notes. The results of the testing would however be taken into account when the later programmes were made."

This meant that the BBC-Open University production unit had been placed in a very difficult position. The course was to be developmentally tested for

credit but it was already too late to change the production schedule to enable all broadcasts to be available for testing. In this situation it would hardly be surprising if some people felt they had been 'railroaded' into doing something against their better judgement.

The Methodology Used

The developmental testing of A101 relied on the responses of approximately forty specially recruited testers who worked through the draft versions of the course. These testers were in three centres, Birmingham, Wales and London.

The television programmes were distributed on video-cassettes, the radio programmes on audio-cassettes, and the visuals for the radio-vision programmes were sent as photocopies.

Ater viewing or listening to each programme the testers completed a questionnaire which included a combination of closed and open-response items. This allowed the testers the maximum opportunity for explaining any difficulties they might have encountered.[6]

From these responses, and discussions with the student testers and tutors, a report was produced on each programme tested. These reports included an outline of the programme content, details of the number of questionnaires sent and the response rate. This was followed by a description and analysis of the responses the testers had made together with a list of recommendations for change if any seemed necessary.

In addition to the material collected from the questionnaire further feedback was gathered at regular discussions with the student testers and a close liaison was maintained between the academics and producers who had worked on the programmes and the member of the Audio-Visual Media Research Group acting as the programme evaluator.

Because the BBC production schedule had been drawn up long before the decision to developmentally test A101 it was not possible to have the full broadcast component ready for testing. This meant that less than half of the television and radio programmes were fully tested.

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[6] An example of the style of questionnaire used is contained in Appendix C.

THE RESULTS OF THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Problems with the Methodology

A number of concerns were voiced about the mechanics of the process of developmental testing as used with A101. Three people commented on the poor quality of the materials available to the testers. In one case the photo-copies of the visuals for a radio-vision programme were inadequate. In a second the videotape recorder did not work properly.

Another difficulty reported by a number of the respondents to the follow-up questionnaire was the problem of getting materials to students on time and the danger of testing programmes in isolation because the other components were not available. One person commented that he had found the results of developmental testing most rewarding when the correct synchronisation between the various components had been achieved. Unfortunately two programmes with which he had been involved appeared to have been tested without the related materials.

A third difficulty was that with some programmes there was no possibility of alterations after testing. As stated earlier this was partly the result of the late decision to developmentally test A101. However, it was also the result of a production schedule which, because of the operational constraints it places on course teams, appears to preclude a systematic testing of all broadcasts before presentation.

The Expectations of the Course Team

Course team members appear to have had limited expectations of the probable results of developmentally testing the broadcast components of A101. Mention was often made of the difficulty of changing programmes, especially television programmes, because of the cost and tight production schedules. Perhaps as a result of this three respondents said that their primary hope was to test, and possibly increase, the integration of the various course components.

A concern of at least two individuals was that credit was being given to students who successfully completed the course even though the full broadcast component was not available. As such they felt the students used as testers had not experienced the complete course.

From all the cautious comments it appears that those members of the course team who completed the follow-up questionnaire had very limited expectations of what developmental testing might achieve.

Perceptions of the Results of Testing A101

When describing the results of developmental testing most of the academics and producers said that problems with some of the programmes had had been highlighted. However, four producers said that the results were merely a reinforcement of what they already knew. Programmes which testing showed to be unsatisfactory were already recognised as having problems. One respondent even said that these shortcomings were the result of the rush to meet the developmental testing dates.

If we postpone consideration of whether the problems identified by the developmental testing had been recognised in advance it is clear that a number of major changes were made. In particular TV13, "Moral Responsibility" was remade as a result of the responses from the testers. It provides a good example of how developmental testing can identify problems and suggest possible solutions to those problems; leaving the final choice of the preferred course of action to those involved with the programme's production.[7]

In the first version of this programme a discussion of the topic of moral responsibility was held between three academics with one also acting as a form of chairman. This version of the programme was incomplete since the animation sequence which illustrated the song used as the basis of the programme had not been completed in time for testing. Despite this, developmental testing showed that students found it difficult to identify the programme's purpose. In addition some students were unclear about the main points made during the discussion. These, and other problems led to the recommendation that the programme should be remade. Four recommendations were made:

1. "The programme should be re-made to take account of student comment. What seems to be needed is a more direct exposition of some of the main points from the Units, by way of an introduction to the discipline".

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[7] Appendix C contains the questionnaire and complete developmental testing report for TV13, "Moral Responsibility".

2. "Both the song and the topic could be retained, but there could be place for a chairman, and two speakers. The speakers should have clearly identifiable stances, and be able to argue them strongly. The chairman could, at appropriate points, draw out the main lines to identify and concretize the different approaches made by different speakers."

3. "It would be preferable if the chairman's role were more impartial, designed to both progress and halt the discussion at key points. In this programme the roles were rather confused."

4. "As an introductory programme, TV13 needs to be much more carefully structured."

In the remade programme most of these points appear to have been taken into account. Direct references were made to the written course units. The song and the topic were retained, but the format of three speakers in discussion was replaced by a presenter and one other who provided an interpretation of the song. The first presenter also made more explicit how the programme functioned as an introduction to philosophy and provided a clearer structure to the programme; especially through the use of captions to reinforce the main points being made.

Other programmes were altered but in a number of cases the broadcast notes, rather than the programme, were changed. In some instances this meant that only one of the recommendations from developmental testing was followed. An example of this was TV15, "Appearance and Reality" where changes to the broadcast notes were recommended but it was also suggested that the programme should be remade. In the event the broadcast notes were revised but the programme remained unchanged.

Views on the Future for Developmental Testing

When asked how wide an application developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes only one person saw it having a wide application, and even then only if "positive concrete results are forthcoming early enough and producers are not then shackled to them". Three other respondents to the follow-up questionnaire felt developmental testing should be used selectively with courses or programme types which differ from those made in the past. Three people felt that developmental testing of a multi-media course should only take place when the whole course

is tested with all components in the right order.

One person saw some form of developmental testing as desirable for introductory, high population courses, but less important with high level courses.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Most of those who completed the follow-up questionnaire had extremely limited expectations of the probable results of developmentally testing the broadcast component of A101. This often appeared to be a consequence of course team members accepting that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to make changes to the television programmes in particular. Unfortunately this is probably a realistic view to take with the pressures and constraints imposed by the present production system.

In this case the decision to developmentally test A101 was made too late for the production schedule to be altered to allow for complete testing of the broadcast component with facilities for alterations where indicated. However, it is open to speculation whether the present production system could ever allow for this approach. This has major implications for the decision on which model of developmental testing to use. When discussing the problems of applying an almost identical model to the developmental testing of A241 Frances Berrigan wrote:

> "All the problems outlined above hinge largely on the fact that as yet developmental testing at the Open University has to be carried out despite the established production process. That is the current production system does not assume a proper developmental testing prodcedure." [8]

The same difficulty can be identified in the attempt to apply the developmental testing model to the broadcast component of A101. With print materials early drafts can be tested and revised before the final version is produced. This is not the case with either television or radio. Written outlines of the programmes are produced but it is difficult to judge the finished programme from these outlines. Making revisions to a completed programme, especially in the case of television, is a costly and difficult

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[8] Berrigan, p. 62

exercise. However, neither the production system, nor the developmental testing model is sacrosanct. Both are required to serve the needs of the users, including the students who eventually register for the course. If either fails to meet these needs the possibility of change should be investigated.

A further set of problems were the result of the slightly different ways in which the developmental testing model was used to test the broadcast component and the print materials. From the outset it had been recognised that there was a need to collect both subjective and objective data. A suitable data collection process was developed which added feedback questions at appropriate points throughout the text to investigate the reactions of testers to short instructional sequences. Data on both the testers' understanding of the content and reactions to the approach could be collected. In this way the learning events were kept comparatively short, so ensuring that the reactions of testers were fresh in their minds. In contrast the questions used to developmentally test the television and radio programmes were given <u>after</u> the twenty five minute programme. This meant a comparatively long learning event. With some programmes the feedback questions also tended to emphasise the subjective reactions of the testers to broad matters of pace and style rather than their understanding of the content. For the information from testing to be of maximum value to a course team there is a need to combine both subjective and objective data.

Another problem which could limit the future use of some form of developmental testing is the attitude towards the evaluations produced. Some of the programme producers said that they already knew which programmes were unsatisfactory before seeing the developmental testing reports. This is a very common response to developmental testing, however, there are several levels at which one can know there is a problem. A general idea that something is wrong, and knowing what to do to correct it are two very different things. There is always the danger that a problem will not be solved but merely replaced by something which students will find equally difficult. As reported earlier the material from the developmental testing of broadcasts <u>can</u> identify specific learning problems encountered by students <u>and</u> suggest courses of action to solve these problems.

From this study it would appear that if the broadcast component is to be fully developmentally tested the following conditions must exist.

1) Adequate resources must be allocated including sufficient finance, personnel and production time.

2) The agreement to developmentally test a course must be made at an early enough stage to ensure the production of all programmes in time for testing.

3) Production methods must be developed which will make it possible to produce draft versions of programmes just as draft versions of print materials are an accepted part of course production.

4) There is some need for selectivity. It is probably unnecessary to developmentally test all courses or programmes and with present resources this would be impossible anyway. The criteria for deciding which courses or programmes to test must be identified.

5) There must be a general recognition and acceptance that developmental testing might indicate the need for a 100 percent remake. Though in practice this is unlikely except in revolutionary new subject areas where production formats which have been shown to be successful cannot be employed.

In conclusion developmental testing must not be seen as a panacea, nor should it be dismissed because in this instance the approach used did not prove totally adequate. There is a need to experiment with the methodology until a more satisfactory method for developmentally testing the broadcast component of a course is found. The approach adopted by the Technology Faculty at the Open University, who are to present their foundation course for two years and collect data during that initial period, may prove superior.[9] Other possibilities exist including the piloting of individual programmes or pre-testing of sections from programmes which employ novel techniques. However, if these strategies must function within a rigid and inflexible course production system the search for the correct methodology will be made much more difficult, if not impossiole.

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[9] For a full description of the model being used by the Technology Faculty see Michael Nathenson, "The Evaluation of T101: '246' Model." Milton Keynes: Open University, Institute of Educational Technology 1978 (Mimeographed).

APPENDIX A - The Questionnaire Used in the Follow-up Study

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match your expectations?

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing?
(Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing.
(For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc.).

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

APPENDIX B - Written Responses to the Questionnaire

Respondent Number 1

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

> To find out whether the programmes engage the students' interests and, in particular, to see how relevant they find them to their course of study.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

> I knew there was not much prospect of remaking many of the TV programmes so I was a bit doubtful on that score. But I favoured it on the ground that it would increase the integration in the course by making more of its components available earlier.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

> See under (2).

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match your expectations?

> In general, entirely.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

> The information has not been made available to the full course team so I cannot answer this in general terms.

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc.).

> Two programmes I was involved in were remade (TV13 and TV28) both with major changes. TV28 was to have been remade anyhow, since the CT was not happy with it. I did retain certain elements (including some parts of the BBC Jane Eyre series) primarily because of the interest the students had shown in them in the DT version.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

> None.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

> I think there are many benefits from whole course developmental testing for credit and that the programmes should be part of that. I think it would be desirable to have some form of developmental

testing generally, for high population low level courses in particular. I do not think it needs the same priority for higher level courses.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

There are marked benefits for scheduling (as A101 shows) so I would expect project control and publishing to favour it, as well as Chairmen, Deans, and so on. The main negative factor is broadcasting, since there is not the production capacity to remake TV programmes as a matter of course in the light of testing and that means that they cannot - unlike correspondence texts which can be re-written in part as a matter of course - really be on trial. There is also the difficulty that TV programmes date more quickly than printed materials - other things being equal - and so there will be pressure not to make them last an extra year.

Respondent Number 2

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

To enable all members of the course team, but primarily I myself, to gauge the effectiveness of a programme in fulfilling its objectives: and more precisely, if at all possible to pin down the most effective elements in that programme, in terms either of form or content.

These findings may never relate to another programme but they are likely to.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

Charitable, but sceptical. Everyone, particularly academics in the field of communications, are sure that such information is obtainable, and in an intelligible form. Moreover, any producer who disagrees is liable to be dismissed as someone successfully brainwashed by his own medium.

But we are, it seems to me, a long way from success, since I began my career in television, and when I conducted feedback experiments of my own long before the OU was thought of, surveys have proceeded to tell us what was successful, seldom what would be.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

At least (one hopes) a step in the right direction - unfortunately a very crude one.

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match your expectations?

Vast efforts of I.E.T. appreciated, and a heightener/depresser of morale according to result, but only the individual comments quoted (and no doubt these were just as subjective as the opinions which went into the statistics) made me consider programmes anew.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

The value will only become apparent when a similar problem in the resolution of our practical problems presents itself. This may not be for months or years. The whole line of questioning implies that a formular for 'good programmes' exists. Naturally I will ponder reasons for low popularity, etc in my work, and try to apply the results, but of necessity the results will simply suggest where I myself must look for faults. Often I find that I 'know' why a programme is 'a failure' or 'a success'. It succeeds because it is a 'glossy', fashionable, 'comprehended' subject (typical would be 'Art Nouveau' or 'Turner') and it must then be treated in an expensive conventional manner. I'd bet that 'The Late Victorian Stage' wouldn't succeed, however well done.

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc.).

None - though in our faculty poor 'marks' might mean a partial remake - if they arrived in time to make this possible. But as I've implied, this doesn't mean changes won't be made in future programmes.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

A very tight work schedule. Lack of money. In the event of poor results, lack of a precise indication how changes could be an improvement.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

Wide - but only if positive, concrete results are forthcoming early enough, and producers are then not shackled to them. As a producer I don't neccessarily consider myself as artist or even a craftsman, but every circumstance is different, and there comes a point when I must have a right to disregard counsel from feedback if I feel there is good reason.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

I am a producer, too concerned with my programmes to soothsay. Convenience clearly is one, but whether it will be my convenience that will be considered, I cannot say. Since we have the best available conditions for testing, I feel we should all persevere, but I.E.T. should also understand that broadcasting is unlikely to yield its fruits easily.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you wish to make.

No response.

Respondent Number 3

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

I am not sure I understand this question but if it means what it ought to mean my answer is that developmental testing should help to ensure that effective teaching points are properly paced and programmes have an assimilable degree of information in them.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

Suspicion.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

I hoped that certain assumptions about what the students are familiar with and what they can understand when explained visually would be challenged.

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match you expectations?

Developmental testing was not able to provide me with as much help as I had hoped but this may have been because of problems getting the material to students in time.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

In one instance developmental testing replies were useful in showing that students have not understood a philosophy discussion. However, a similar criticism was made by colleagues - comprehension is always a problem with philosophy programmes and the developmental results merely sharpened up our concern. The other experience I had was less happy since the programme was not actually played to the students who were supposed to be testing it. I understand that the video machine broke.

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc.).

The philosophy discussion above was remade along the same lines but with clearer exposition. It is not possible to say whether we would have decided to do this anyway.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

I would be happy to modify programmes in the light of developmental testing but at this stage I think it would be fairer to say that the information gleamed from the tests has been partial because of the difficulties of getting all the unit material ready on time.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

Testing would be helpful for courses or programme types different from those made in the past.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

Time.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

No response.

Respondent Number 4

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

To draw conclusions about successful uses of broadcasting identify areas where resourses can profitably be employed, look at working methods and BBC/OU working relationships.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

That it would be difficult to make a satisfactory assessment if correspondence units, broadcasts, and braodcasting supplement could not all be tested together.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

I hope conclusions described in (1) above may be discussed, criteria established.

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match your expectations?

Where there has been syncronisation with correspondence units, I found that the results were certainly very rewarding. But I did notice that 2 of my programmes tested seem to have been analysed in isolation from the rest of the course.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

'How useful' is in my opinion the sort of meaningless question which dog this kind of research. Useful for what?

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications fundamental improvements, etc.).

There was no possibility of altering my programmes post testing.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

It is not possible to remake the programmes and correspondence units.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

Not all courses - probably selective blocks of courses where well proven formulae for broadcasting are not applicable. Courses which do not have an obvious role for broadcasting etc.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

No response.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

No response.

Respondent Number 5

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

To check the relationship of broadcasts to other course material and to test whether the integration envisaged by the course team is in fact operating.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

I was in favour of it, while wishing the broadcasts as far as possible to be set within the proper context of the other course material. I always felt that it was the relationship between the parts rather than the broadcasts on their own which could profitably be tested.

3. In the case of A101 what, (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

Modifications in the broadcast notes, possibly altered references to the broadcasts in the printed units.

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match your expectations?

Exactly.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

Very useful in the sense of confirming that in general we were on the right lines.

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc.).

Changes in broadcast notes, but none in broadcast materials as such.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

In theory time might well have been the constraint, but in practice I am not sure that this was so.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

Not a very wide application.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

Self-development by certain members of IET strikes me as being counter-productive.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

No response.

Respondent No. 6

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

Telling us something we had not foreseen.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

I was in favour of testing, but opposed to giving credit, as a large percentage of programmes were not ready in time and, therefore, pilot students did not have a complete course.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

Not much.

4. How far did your experience of developmental testing match your expectations?

Completely, i.e. my judgement of the quality of the programme agreed with that of the students.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

Since the students were enthusiastic about both the programmes I produced (A101/05 and A101/08), it boosted my morale. The term 'useful' is dubious at the best of times, especially when asked of students. It is a limiting term: useful for passing the exam?... Education (and programmes) is wider than that.

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc).

There were no changes recommended.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

Because of 6, there are none.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

Unless all the programmes are tested, and all the Units are sent to pilot students in the right order, and all the equipment works, I don't think it should continue.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

The drop-out rate of pilot students, and the fact that a complicated machinery lumbers into action for small returns.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

I am a little uneasy about the fact that if a small percentage of students find something difficult, the recommendation is to simplify. The danger is that this will result in spoon-feeding for the weaker student and boredom for the brighter one.

Respondent No. 7

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

A better relation, in the students' experience of the course, to the written material; and improvements in the broadcasts themselves, as such.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

Favourable except that it meant a very great rush to get them ready in time.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

See 1 above.

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match your expectations?

I do not think I obtained any insight about relation of broadcasts to units; and no criticisms of broadcasts that I could not myself have made. It was quite a good reinforcement, in several cases, of one's own opinions.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

A101-RV 05: photocopies of the pictures were unfortunately not nearly good enough. Some students couldn't even see the details being discussed. This is a great problem with developmental testing Radiovision. I don't see how to overcome it.
A101-Radio 14: students complained at great length of the notes, which accordingly were reduced.

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc).

See question 5

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

No response.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

I do not think that I myself have learned more from it than a general caution about not crowding in too much material. This lesson doesn't need to be repeated.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

Its effects on the unit material.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

No response.

Respondent No. 8

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

Open University courses are multi-media based. Every effort is made to integrate the Television and the radio programmes with the correspondence texts and present a learning and teaching whole to the student.

I think therefore, that any course that is developmentally tested for credit, should be developmentally tested in toto and the student feedback should be judged in toto.

Certainly specific questionnaires can be addressed to the broadcasting; how it fitted into the testing; whether it fulfilled the aims laid down in the Broadcast Notes; and any other points which the producer/academic wants to elicit from the testing but ideally, it should not be possible for the student to respond to the broadcasting independently of the course as a whole.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

I was extremely unhappy that A101 should be developmentally tested for credit without the complete broadcasting component. The Course Team were anxious that some developmental testing should be done and I of course, did not oppose, though my views are well-known. A101 broadcasting not only has horizontal links with the correspondence units but it has a vertical structure of its own, specially designed to help the student make the inter-disciplinary links the Course Team want. In no way could these be tested as in only one of the disciplines (Philosophy) were all the three programmes ready at approximately the right time.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

I had no hopes for the results of the developmental testing of A101 as in no way could our aims be tested. Some of the programmes were found not to be totally satisfactory but I and my producers knew at the time that they were so because they were made too hurriedly in order to catch the developmental testing dates.

This is no way should be taken to under-mine the work that Frances Berrigan put into the feedback but her hands were really tied by the inadequacies of the situation. We were always interested to read her reports but, as she herself will admit, they could not provide us really with the kind of information we needed to whether the broadcasting as a whole was working.

4. How far did your expectations of developmental testing match your expectations?

I didn't expect anything from the developmental testing and the results exactly matched my expectations.

5. In your opinion how useful was the information provided by developmental testing?
(Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

See 3

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc).

There was only one programme that we tested (and the programme was not finished at the time) which provided us with a fundamental need to restructure it and that was the programme on 'Moral Responsibility'. However, I have to add that we knew it was wrong at the time but we wanted it to go forward as it was as we had no time to remake it before the Developmental Testing day. There were minor modifications to two other programmes, again based on knowledge that we already had. To be fair to the developmental testers, I reiterate that there was not enough broadcasting to be able to make a judgement on its efficacy.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

The fact that we were not able to complete the broadcasting in time for the developmental testing is the only factor that prevented us from making any use of the information gained.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

In my opinion, if a course is planned with an essential broadcasting component it should not be tested until it's fully complete. Now, unfortunately, owing to the differing time-tables of production, this is rarely possible and I feel that if Course Teams want their correspondence texts tested, of course they should do so, but the University should not pretend that they are testing an Open University course as such. They are testing a part of it.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

I imagine that Course Team wishes for developmental testing and the amount of valuable feedback they get will be the deciding factor.

It is clearly desirable that courses that have to last several years should in some way be given an opportunity to rethink, rewrite or remake if some of the elements prove to be unsatisfactory but in my view, it will probably be better to present the course for one year in its entirety and then allow time for rethinks, rewrites and remakes of the whole course.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

I fear you will think that I am thoroughly negative: this is not so. What I am negative about is the fact that a course which demands broadcasting as an essential component is then tested without that component and a credit given in the case of students achieving the required standard. It makes nonsense of the whole multi-media basis of Open University learning and it very often makes nonsense of what the broadcasts are trying to do.

Respondent Number 9

1. What do you think, in general, ought to be the effect of developmentally testing broadcasts?

To improve them. Because of the comparative cost of radio and T.V. programmes more can be done if a radio programme turns out to be not very good. The developmental testing can indicate required changes in the broadcast notes.

2. What was your initial attitude to the developmental testing of A101 programmes?

Favourable.

3. In the case of A101 what (if anything) did you think would be the result of developmental testing?

I didn't know what to expect.

4. How far did your experiences of developmental testing match you expectations?

I didn't expect the quality of the reproduction to be so bad. The D. T. students couldn't properly hear what was being said, particularly by Prof. Ernst Gombrich, who had a slight foreign accent.

5. In your opinion, how useful was the information provided by developmental testing? (Please answer fully giving reasons for your answer).

So far as the broadcast notes were concerned it was very useful. I re-wrote them completely.

6. Please describe any specific changes in broadcast materials which you consider were directly attributable to developmental testing. (For any changes you describe please also indicate what educational significance you would place on them; i.e. minor modifications, fundamental improvements, etc.).

See 5 above.

7. Please give details of any factors which may have prevented you from making the optimum use of the information gained from developmental testing.

No response.

8. How wide an application do you think developmental testing should have in the future production of Open University programmes?

It all depends on how it is managed. Potential students are not necessarily the best people to suggest how programmes can be improved.

9. What do you consider the most important factors which will decide whether developmental testing is used more, or less widely at the Open University?

The most important factor <u>should be</u> its usefulness. Does it result in improvements which can be made? My own experience is too limited to warrant an answer.

10. Please use this space for any further comments you may wish to make.

No response.

APPENDIX C - Sample Developmental Testing Report

A101 Developmental Testing

Report on TV13: Moral Responsibility (Philosophy)

A. The Programme and Questionnaire

1. This programme was presented in the form of a discussion between Rosalind Hursthouse, Ossie Hanfling and Anthony Kenny. The topic was whether a crime could be said to be a wilful criminal act, or a disease. The Sargeant Krupke's song from West Side Story was used to lead into the topic. Students were given the words printed out, and it was intended to open the programme with an animated cartoon timed to the music. However, as the animation was not complete there were gaps in the programme as viewed.

2. The speakers took varied points of view, but it could not be said that any one speaker presented a "for" or "against" stance: different individuals introduced particular points into the argument as it progressed. Towards the end of the discussion the point was made that opinions about crime would vary depending upon the role of the expert (lawyer, doctor, psychiatrist, social worker). Philosophy helps to approach such issues logically.

3. Students were sent a printed version of the song, which they were advised to read before viewing. The Broadcast Notes contained a brief outline of the topic, and asked students to consider a number of questions before watching the programme, to bear them in mind while watching and to return to them after the programme.

4. The questionnaire was sent to 30 students. A copy of it and the Broadcast Notes is included with this report.

B. Student Response

1. Twenty five students returned copies of the questionnaire. Of these, seventeen had seen the programme. Reasons for not viewing were illness, a car breakdown, holidays and in two cases the inaccessibility of a V.C.R. (Wales).

2. It is difficult to assess this programme, as students did not see it in its completed form. Thus, it perhaps appeared to have less structure as a programme than might have been the case with the animated sequences. However, as the bulk of the time will be taken up with the discussion itself, responses to it could be fairly reliable.

3. Overall Reaction

4 students did not give an overall reaction to the programme.
4 students reacted entirely favourably.
2 students were fairly favourably disposed.
7 students reacted unfavourably.

Comments from students who were critical were:

1. Surprised it was so "light". I was expecting a heavier content.
2. Not what I expected.
3. Confusion - relieved now I've read Unit 13.
4. Found it rather muddled. Couldn't easily follow the line of argument. Ideas seemed to be thrown about.
5. Out of content. Thrown in at the deep end.
6. Very open-ended. So open-ended as to say nothing.
7. Confusing and irrelevant.

4. Relevance to Study of Unit 13

1 - very relevant
5 - fairly relevant
3 - not very relevant
2 - not relevant at all
4 - don't know (had not read all of Unit 13)
2 - No answer

Three people consider it relevant to Unit 14 and suggested it should come later in the Course.

5. Point Reached in Studies BEFORE Viewing

4 students did not indicate the point they had reached
5 students were between pages 15 to 30 of Unit 13
6 students had read page 45 or read the entire Unit
2 students had not started the Unit

6. Student Estimation of Programme's Interest Level

1 - very interesting
9 - fairly interesting
3 - not very interesting
0 - not at all interesting
4 - no answer

Reasons given for ratings

A. Fairly Interesting

1. Interesting way in via the song.
2. Liked the song, medium could have been used to better advantage - did not delve enough.
3. I didn't like the subject.
4. Interesting as a conversation.
5. It's a common layman's dilemma.
6. Enjoyed seeing the two Unit Authors. Song livened things up.
7. Wasn't particularly interested in the subject matter. Interested in seeing the lecturers.
8. The discussion was an easy informal means of introducing me to the subject.

B. Not Very Interesting

1. Not all that interesting because it did not seem to be relevant.
2. I found none of the speakers committed to their argument. They seemed to discuss it for the sake of the argument - not the issue.

3. I was a bit late and I found it difficult to pick up in the middle of the discussion.

7. Broadcast Notes

(i) Pre-reading of Notes

9 - read thoroughly
5 - skimmed them
1 - glanced at them only
1 - didn't read them
1 - don't know

(ii) Post-Broadcast Reading

3 - read thoroughly
5 - skimmed them
0 - glanced at them
6 - didn't read them
3 - no answer

(iii) Answering Questions in the Notes

2 - yes, answered all of them
4 - answered some of them
1 - tried to, but couldn't
7 - didn't try to ——→ These students did not have time to answer the questions as they went straight into a tutorial.
3 - no answer

8. Students' Interpretation of the Purpose of the Programme

There does not appear to be a clear or agreed understanding among respondents of the purpose of this programme. Comments from those who wrote them are reproduced in full here.

(a)2. To show that the disciplines of philosophy are a help in understanding the premise underlying each view - and logically weighing one against the other.

3. To show students a coherent philosophical discussion.

4. To show how philosophical argument can be used in a discussion of social issues.

5. To show applied philosophy.

7. I think the purpose of the programme was an attempt to show or teach us how a philosophical debate should be shaped. Weighing each argument against another etc.

9. To show that philosophy is being put into practice every day in ordinary arguments (but that it does not come out with hard and fast answers).

11. To introduce the idea of philosophical discussion.

12. To introduce philosophy, and show that philosophical questions are in every facet of life.

13. An introduction to thinking in different directions.

15. To show us what Ossie Hanfling and Rosalind Hursthouse look like!

18. To show how philosophers do their thing.

20. To show what a philosophical discussion was like - how it is relevant to everyday issues.

21. To illustrate a typical philosophy discussion. To give students a concrete example of philosophy and how it should relate to social problems.

22. To present a discussion of the sort a philosopher might take up.

23. To show how philosophy is related to everyday life and can be applied to many of our current problems particularly cause and punishment.

24. An attempt to show us modern philosophers tackling a current problem.

(b)Students were then asked to give their views on how <u>successful</u> the programme was in achieving that purpose.

Here, four students considered that the programme had been successful in achieving its perceived purpose. A further <u>six</u> students felt that the programme had been only <u>fairly</u> successful. One of these felt that it would have been better as a radio programme, and that it could have been more down to earth.

Five students felt that the programme had either had no clearly discernible purpose, or had not achieved any purpose successfully.

9. Student Understanding of Content

As this programme took the form of a fairly loosely structured argument, and it was placed so that students would have just begun their reading of the Philosophy Block, it was agreed to ask them whether they could follow the main lines of the argument, both in studio discussion and in the West Side Story song.

Of the sixteen students who replied to the question: "During the programme, were you able to follow the argument?"

Eleven students replied, without qualification, that they could do so. Two of these students thought the performance stiff.

The remaining five students considered that they could follow the argument, but made criticisms of it. These were:

1. Most of the time. Sometimes didn't see how points followed. I like concrete conclusions.
2. It was quite good - though I found it not very concise and definite enough. The speakers obviously agreed and couldn't easily give opposite or contradictory opinions.
3. Think too many points were covered. They should have followed through, say 2 of a) and b) or c) and d).
4. Yes - what was said I understood although many points were not followed through as much as they could have been.
5. No, there were some instances where speakers asked a rhetorical question to open discussion and did not provide any solutions - too bitty.

All students were able to follow the argument in the West Side Story song.

A further question on content was: "Which of the points made in the programme stood out to you as the most important?"

Student comments are reproduced below:

2. No judgement on moral responsibility is a final one.
3. Sorry, can't remember.
4. Laws have to be imposed for society to run properly. They do have an effect. When seeking advice we have to choose the right expert. Philosophy is to help ordinary people to go to the right expert. To approach problems in a logical, sensible, clear headed manner.
5. Not sure.
6. N.A.
7. N.A.
8. Inability to come to a conclusive answer.
9. There are no final answers to moral dilemmas.
10. Philosophy is logical reasoning.
11. None.
12. None really.
13. Society is responsible for maintaining moral standards.
14. There may be many sides to an argument - it just depends which "hat" you are wearing.
15. Can't draw a line between crime and disease. Who is to say? Who are the experts, and when is the Philosopher called upon to help decide?
16. None. Left a vacuum and an atmosphere of sterility.
17. Difficulty of deciding whether a criminal act is a crime or a disease. Lawyers may not be the ones to decide whether a criminal is punishable or not.
18. Some problems cannot be solved even after philosophical analysis.

10. Presentation

Finally, two questions were asked on the presentation of the programme. The first asked students to give their reaction to the discussion format. The second invited them to suggest an alternative type of programme. Students' views on the discussion were:

1. Would have preferred 1 person. Found changes in tone of voice distracting.
2. Interesting and easy to follow.
3. Presentation by discussion good - but should be more polished.
4. Prefer different format.
5. N.A.
6. Think this programme was very good as a discussion.
7. Two men (or women) can put their opposing points of view across much better than one person trying to do both.
8. I like it but they must relax more. It would have been more enjoyable with an interviewer plus the three philosophers.
9. This is reasonable. You can show varying points of view, that people can identify with.
10. O.K. I thought there was too much emphasis on the song.
11. I couldn't with certainty pinpoint the line of argument.
12. Livelier than one person talking to another, and I suppose that's how Philosophy should be expounded.
13. I liked it. The variations in opinion and voice tone helped.
14. Quite favourably - although I thought the discussion moved rather fast.
15. This was as good a way as any. But the discusser could have been more convincing.
16. For this subject, I think it is ideal. It also helps to make the subject appear less formidable to the uninitiated.
17. Just about acceptable. Perhaps argument would be clearer if "subtitles" appeared at the appropriate moment to clarify issues.

As is apparent from the above, there does not appear to be a strong dislike of discussions as such, but frequent criticisms of this particular discussion. Taken with the previous comments about the argument itself, it would seem that most would have preferred a tighter, more clearly defined discussion, with identifiable points being made, and perhaps each speaker taking a particular standpoint. As it was, there was no real conflict, the argument did not reach a high point, and there was no resolution.

The last question, on alternative styles, produced some suggestions. Two students wanted a more direct introduction to the Philosophy block - and more related to the first Unit. Two others wanted specific points from the Units taken up, namely, a justification or repudiation of empirical evidence, answering the sceptic about the existence of things. One student wanted to see the methods of Descartes etc. in action tackling a philosophical problem. Another student suggested that extracts from the history programmes would be taken and the subjective/moral judgements in them, discussed.

C. Summary and Conclusion

Despite the fact that this programme was not complete when received, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the main body of the programme, the discussion itself.

The programme presented a number of problems. Students are new to the study of the subject when viewing and, from their comments, do not appear to be at all sure about the nature of the subject itself. For this reason, it may have been preferable to introduce the discipline in a more straightforward way, where the approach taken by the philosopher is clearly distinguishable from that of other disciplinarians.

There are a number of students who did react favourably to the programme but, when they were asked to describe the purpose of the programme, the paucity of their answers reveals that they let the programme "wash over them" somewhat. Others were basically dissatisfied, and seemed to be looking for a programme which drew upon, extended and illustrated more directly, key points made in the Units.

The discussion format itself could have been tauter - perhaps relieved by some guiding commentary, selecting out examples of the philosophical approach. As it was, with three speakers fairly closely aligned, it could have appeared to the novice no more instructive than the usual dinner party conversation. It seems that students liked the idea of the song, and the topic itself was of interest, but they expected a dialectic rather different (more perceptibly different) from the exchange which did take place.

D. Recommendations

1. The programme should be re-made to take account of student comment. What seems to be needed is a more direct exposition of some of the main points from the Units, by way of an introduction to the discipline.

2. Both the song and the topic could be retained, but there could be place for a chairman, and two speakers. The speakers should have clearly identifiable stances, and be able to argue them strongly. The chairman could, at appropriate points, draw out the main lines to identify and concretize the different approaches made by different speakers.

3. It would be preferable if the chairman's rôle were more impartial, designed to both progress and halt the discussion at key points. In this programme the rôles were rather confused.

4. As an introductory programme, TV13 needs to be much more carefully structured.

Frances Berrigan
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A101 DEVELOPMENTAL TESTING.

TV 13: Philosophy: Moral Responsibility.

Please write your NAME: _____

1. Did you see TV 13: Moral Responsibility?

Yes ☐
No ☐ Why NOT?

2. What was your reaction to the programme?

3. How relevant to your studies did you find TV 13?

Very relevant..... ☐
Fairly relevant..... ☐
Not very relevant.... ☐
Not relevant at all.. ☐
Don't know..... ☐

Please give reasons for your answer:

4. How far had you reached in you Unit study BEFORE seeing the programme?

UNIT ☐ Page ☐

5. How interesting did you find the programme?

Very interesting..... ☐
Rather interesting..... ☐
Not very interesting.... ☐
Not at all interesting.. ☐
Don't know..... ☐

Please give reasons:

---

6. Did you read the Broadcast Notes for TV 13?

BEFORE

Yes, read thoroughly.. ☐
Yes, skimmed them..... ☐
Glanced at them only.. ☐
No, didn't read..... ☐

AFTER

Yes, read thoroughly.. ☐
Yes, skimmed them..... ☐
Glanced at them only.. ☐
No, didn't read..... ☐

---

7. How useful did you find the Broadcast Notes?

Very helpful..... ☐
Rather helpful..... ☐
Not very helpful.... ☐
Not at all helpful.. ☐
Don't know..... ☐

Please give reasons for your answer:

---

8. Did you answer the questions in the Broadcast Notes?

Yes, all of them..... ☐
Yes, some of them..... ☐
Tried to, but couldn't.. ☐
No, didn't try to..... ☐
Don't know..... ☐

Please give an explanation for your answer:

9. a) What would you say was the purpose of this programme?

b) In your view, how successful was the programme in achieving this purpose?

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10. During the programme, were you able to follow the argument? (Please explain your answer).

---

11. Were you able to follow the arguments in the song?

---

12. Which of the point/s made in the programme stood out to you as the most important?

---

13. This programme was presented in the form of a discussion. How did you react to this type of presentation?

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14. Is there another type of programme which you would have found more helpful at this stage in the course?

Thank you very much for your help.

Frances Berrigan,
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Audio-Visual Media Research Group.